

On A Common Peculiarity in Slavic and Lakota Negative Sentences

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I. Introduction

In two previous publications of mine (Iliev 2014; Iliev 2018) I have discussed the use of the negative genitive, typical in some Slavic languages, comparing it with similar occurrences in Baltic (Lithuanian and Latvian) and other Indo-European (Gothic) and non-Indo-European (Estonian, Basque and Japanese) languages. I also suggested that it may be related to the topic category in the Indo-European proto-language, given that in Japanese the phenomenon is expressed in the replacement of the accusative inflection with a topic marker in negation. I have shown examples of the use of the negative genitive, for example from Polish, where its use in such case is mandatory:

Mam czas 'I have time' – against:
have time-acc
Nie mam czasu 'I do not have time';
neg have time-gen

The same is applicable in Russian, where the accusative in the indirect object expresses definiteness, specific reference and contrast, whereas the genitive represents a lack of reference or lack of definiteness:

He ем ветчины 'I do not eat ham' (at all) – but:
neg eat ham-gen
He ем ветчину (но ем картошку, for example)
neg eat ham-acc
'I do not eat ham' (unlike other types of food - potatoes, for example)

Examples in Japanese:

Zasshi-wa yomimasen
magazine-top read-no
'I do not read magazine/magazines' – although I like doing something else like for example:
Hon-o yomimasu 'I read a book' or:
book-acc read
Eigo-o hanasemasu 'I speak English'
English-acc speak

II. THE LAKOTA CASE

The occurrence is also present in another exotic language, this time from North America, notably Lakota, pertaining to the Sioux language stock, with a passive sentence structure, constructed around a topic and in negation direct objects receive a special form, different to the form in a positive sentence. Before delving into structures that interest us in the aforementioned language, I should first explain the different types of sentences in it.

The passive sentence structure in Lakota can be illustrated with the following examples (Tüting 2021) – similarly to several other languages worldwide – Arabic and others, a basic form is the third person singular one:

With the verb 'to come':
hí '(he) came' = 'his coming'
ya-hí 'you came' = 'your coming'
wa-hí 'I came' = 'my coming'.
Or with the verb 'to kill':
kté '(he)-him-killed' ('he killed him') = 'his himkilling' (ref. – Iv. II.)
ya-kté '(you)-him-killed' = 'your himkilling'
wa-kté '(I)-him-killed' = 'my himkilling'
ma-ya-kté 'me-you-killed' = 'your mekilling'
wiča-ya-kté 'you-them-killed' = 'your themkilling'.

Meanwhile, the phrase in Lakota is generally structured around a topic center, therefore this language, like Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Lisu, Vietnamese, Malay, Singaporean English and Malaysian English, is an example of a topic-prominent language (Topic-prominent 2021).

Thus, the previously mentioned *hí* '(he) came' in Lakota is transformed in the following topic-prominent sentence (Tüting):

He hí.

he-topic came

'as for him, this is his coming'

Likewise, *wakté* '(I)-him-killed' is transformed in a new topic-prominent sentence (ibid.):

He wa-kté yelo!

him-topic have-killed exclamation

'as for him, I killed him (= this is my himkilling)'

In the aforementioned examples, the topic prominence is expressed in beginning the phrase with the reused topic semantically repeated further on. But in Lakota, besides word order and use of special words to underline the topic, various topic markers (morphemes) are also used in outlining it, which some authors (see below) also refer to as articles.

The term 'topic (marker)' for these elements is used by Tüting (Tüting 2021).

The term 'article' for these can be found in Lyons (Lyons 1999: 54), Netzel (Netzel 2008: 24), Rood (Rood 2001: 406).

J. Ullrich (Ullrich 2011: 810-811) uses both combined: *Lakota employs different **articles** for real, hypothetical and negative **topics*** (bolded by me – Iv. II.). It is clear that the scholar thinks that the article is used to express a topic, rather than definiteness (or maybe both).

A. IN NON-NEGATIVE SENTENCES

Speaking about **definite articles** (to mark a topic, i.e. a definite topic) in Lakota, *kiŋ/čičiŋ* and *k'uŋ/č'uŋ* are used with the subject (I will hereinafter refer to all topic markers with the abbreviation "top").

1. The *kiŋ/čičiŋ* elements are called definite topic markers (Tüting 2021) or general definite articles (Ullrich 2011: 810; Lyons 1999: 54), similar to the English *the*. As per Lyons, (Lyons 1999: 54) the *kiŋ*-element *is a general one and not non-anaphoric because it is not totally excluded from anaphoric use*. The first illustrational example I will use comes from the same author:

He wičháša-kiŋ ksápA

this man-top smart

'the previously unmentioned man is smart'

If in the sentence 'man' is switched to 'woman', instead of *wičháša-kiŋ* 'the man' we will have ... *wíŋyaŋ-kiŋ* 'the woman ...' (Netzel 2008: 24).

Or another case (in Ullrich 2011: 330):

Thípi-kiŋ zí – 'the house is yellow'

house-top yellow

And also (in Ullrich 2011: 101):

Tháŋkake-čičiŋ hená slolyápi

elderly-top this know

'the elderly know this' (literally: 'as for the elderly, this (they) know')

Similar examples using a direct object (or a compound clause) in English are practically often structured in a different manner in Lakota (in Ullrich 2011: 330):

Tuwé-kiŋ waŋbláke šni

who (is)-top know not

'I did not see who it was' (literally: 'whoever it may be, I do not know (him)')

2. The *k'uŋ/č'uŋ* elements are used for a previously mentioned topic (as per Tüting 2021) or a previously mentioned definite article (as per Lyons 1999: 54; Ullrich 2011: 347) and have no analogy in English. Here also the first example sentence comes from the latter author, according to whom: *Lakota has a specialized definite anaphoric form 'k'uŋ' used when the referent has already been mentioned*:

He wičháša-k'uŋ ksápA

this man-top smart

'this (already mentioned) man is smart'

Or (in Ullrich 2011: 347):

wičháša-k'uŋ hená hípi

men-top those came

'those men (I mentioned earlier) came'

Regarding **indefinite articles**, there are seven in Lakota, four of which (*way*, *eyá*, *wayží*, *etán*) note a **non-negative topic**, and the other three (*wayžíni*, *tákuni*, *tuwéni*) note the **negative topic** (Ullrich 2011: 810).

It is precisely the latter **grammatical category – the negative topic, that is the main subject of examination in the current article**, as it corresponds to the Slavic negative genitive and the Japanese topic in negation, compared in my previous articles (Iliev 2014; Iliev 2018). One may consider that the Lakota case emerges as a middle stage between the situation in Japanese and Russian/Polish (or in Slavic languages as a whole) and proves my hypothesis of the link between Russian (Slavic) negative genitive and the grammatical category of sentence topic.

I shall begin with examining the **non-negative** topic markers in Lakota.

1. The *way* (noted also as *wą*) element, marking an indefinite topic in the singular form in Lakota (in Tüting 2021), or carrying out the role of an indefinite article (in Netzel 2008: 24; Rood 2001: 406), which according to Ullrich (Ullrich 2011: 844) is attached to indefinite existing objects, in many cases resembles the English *a/an* and is used in sentences like ‘I have a book’, ‘we found’, ‘there is a book on the table’ (Rood 2001: 406). The first example shown here comes from Tüting (Tüting 2021):

Wičháša-kiŋ šuŋkawakhán-way oyúspe.
man-top1 horse-top2 caught (him)
'the unmentioned man caught some horse'

Similarly, ‘a man’, ‘some man’ in the position of a direct object would become *wičháša-way* (Netzel 2008: 24).

Here are a few more cases of expressing a real topic **direct object** in Ullrich (Ullrich 2011: 810-814):

Šuŋkawakhán-wášté-way bluhá
horse-good-top have
'I have a good horse' = '(as for) a good horse, I have it'

Hokšíla húŋpa na wičhínčala-way wičhúnyuhapi
boys 2 and girl 1 (= top) have
'we have two boys and one girl'

Šuŋkawakhán-way bluhá – 'I have a horse'
horse-top have

Míla-way olé – 'he is looking for **a (specific)** knife'
knife-top looking

Míla-way mak'ú kte – 'he will give me **a (specific)** knife'
knife-top give will

Míla-way iyéye – 'he found **a** knife'
knife-top found

Wówapi-way blawá – 'I am reading a book'
book-top read

2. The *eyá* element for an indefinite real topic in plural which corresponds to the English *some* (Tüting 2021; Ullrich 2011: 810-812), can be illustrated used in a sentence as follows:

Miyé šuŋkawakhán-eyá owičablúspe yelo.

I horses-top caught-them exclamation
'I caught some horses' (as for the horses, I caught them)

Or:

Míla-eyá bluhá – 'I have some knives'
knives-top have

3. The *wayží* (*wąží*) element marking irreal hypothetical objects (Tüting 2021; Rood 2001: 406; Ullrich 2011: 844) and we could even add lack of specificity, corresponds to sentences like ‘give me a book’, ‘I want a book’, ‘did you find a book?’, where the existence of the object is not indisputable. It is defined as an irreal topic (Ullrich 2011: 810). Here are some examples from this author (Ullrich 2011: 810-811, 618):

Míla-wayží wáčhín – 'I want **a/any** knife'
knife-top want

Or:

Míla-wayží olé – 'he's looking for **a/any** knife'
knife-top looking

Míla-wayží mak'ú kte – 'he will give me **a/any** knife'
knife-top give will

Šuŋkawakhán-wayží luhá he? – 'do you have a horse?'
horse-top have question

Iyéčhínkinyanke-wayží luhápi he? – 'do you (people) have a car?'
car-top have question

Wótapi- wayžǐ káǵiŋ kte – ‘he will make (give) a feast’
feast 1 (= top) make will

4. The *etán* (*etáy*) element for plural hypothetic topics corresponding to the English *some, any* (Ullrich 2011: 810-812):

Míla-etán luhá he? – ‘do you have **any** knives?’
knives-top have question

Other than the aforementioned elements in Lakota, there are two more marking a positive topic: the *héčǐ* element (Ullrich 2011: 155, 810) and the *čha* element (Ullrich 2011: 75, 810), with relative significance but I will not be focusing on them specifically.

B. IN NEGATIVE SENTENCES

Following the previous necessary clarifications, I shall now move on to the essence of the issue discussed, notably **indefinite articles marking a negative topic** in Lakota. It should also be known that double negative is obligatory in this language – ‘I **haven’t** **never** done this’ (Ullrich 2011: 820). We will examine the following elements with the *-ni* suffix with the meaning of ‘not, not any, none’ (Ulrich 2011: 394):

1. The *wayžǐni* (*wǵžǐni*) element used in non-abstract negative to express a non-existent topic in sentences like ‘I don’t have a book’, ‘she can’t find a book’, etc. (Tüting 2021; Rood 2001: 406; Ullrich 2011: 810-811, 619). Examples (Ullrich 2011: 810-811, 619) with negative:

Šúnkawakhán-wayžǐni bluhá šni – ‘I don’t have a horse’
horse-top have not

Compare to the above sentence, containing the *way* marker:

Šúnkawakhán-way bluhá – ‘I have a horse’
horse-top have

As well as to:

Šúnkawakhán-wayžǐ luhá he? ‘do you have a horse?’
horse-top have question

Second example with a negative:

Míla-wayžǐni bluha šni – ‘I don’t have a knife’
knife-top have not

Compare to the above sentence, containing the *eyá* marker:

Míla-eyá bluhá – ‘I have some knives’
knives-top have

Or to:

Míla-wayžǐ wáčhíŋ – ‘I want **a/any** knife’
knife-top want

As well as to:

Míla-wayžǐ olé – ‘he is looking for **a/any** knife’
knife-top looking

As well as to:

Míla-wayžǐ mak’ú kte – ‘he will give me **a/any** knife’
knife-top give will

Third example with a negative:

Thathánka-wayžǐni waybláke šni – ‘I didn’t see any bison’
bison-top see not

Compare this example to the one above meaning ‘I saw a horse’ (Ullrich 2011: 618), where the *way* marker is used:

Šúnkawakhán-way waybláke
horse-top saw

2. The *tákuni* element, which when used alone means ‘nothing’ (Ullrich 2011: 812) and is used in a number of cases. Most Lakota speakers use it instead of *wayžǐni*, when the **negative topic** is an **abstract** noun (Ullrich 2011: 811):

Wówičala-tákuni yuhápi šni – ‘they don’t have faith’
faith-top have not

Another use of the *tákuni* element is with plural negative topics (Ullrich 2011: 811) and can be divided in two subtypes:

a. Animate non-human topic:

Šúnka-tákuni waywíčhablake šni – ‘I didn’t see **any** dogs’
dogs-top see not

б. Inanimate (abstract) topic and uncountable topic ('meat', etc.):

Míla-tákuni waybláke šni – 'I didn't see any knives'

knives-top see not

3. The *tuwéni* element – for plural animate human negative topics (= 'not any') (Ullrich 2011: 810). When used alone *tuwéni* = *nobody* (Ullrich 2011: 812). For example (Ullrich 2011: 811):

Wičhášá-tuwéni waywíchablake šni – 'I didn't see **any** men'

men-top see not

And finally, similarly to Russian, where the genitive suffix symbolizes negation and partitivity, in Lakota, some of the topical markers are also used for such a reason (Ullrich 2011: 816): *some of the people, part of the bread, some of the water*. Using the partitive marker depends on various factors: the essence of the whole, the essence of the part of the whole and whether the part of the whole is positive, negative or interrogative:

affirmation	negation	question	-
<i>húŋh</i>	<i>wayžíni</i>	<i>tóna</i>	for part of a group
...	for part of a single thing
...	for part of an indivisible mass

III. Conclusions

It is obvious that in several languages worldwide, specifically in Polish and Russian (and not only), in Japanese, as well as in Lakota from North America, there is a phenomenon related to the change of the object form in negation. In each of the languages mentioned it has its specificities. In Polish, the direct object in accusative in negation is always replaced by a genitive (*Mam czas* 'I have time' – vs: *Nie mam czasu* 'I don't have time'). In Russian, determination and contrast also play a role alongside negation (*He ем ветчины* 'I do not eat ham at all' – vs.: *He ем ветчину, но ем кортошку*). In addition, in Polish and Russian, certain other categories (animacy) as well as the semantics of the verb can also similarly result in a change of the object form:

Polish *Nie widzę bizona* 'I don't see (the) bison' – vs. the indistinguishable *Widzę bizona* 'I see (the) bison'.

Russian *Я не вижу бизона* 'I don't see (the) bison' – vs. *Я вижу бизона* 'I see (the) bison'.

In Japanese, in similar cases, the direct object (and the subject) also changes, not in terms of case, but rather in relation to the topic category, with contrast also playing an important role.

In Lakota, as demonstrated, the semantics and forms are even more diverse. Irrespective of its different manifestations in different languages, the phenomenon is remarkable and deserves in-depth examination.

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